IN THE CLAIMS

This is a complete and current listing of the claims, marked with status identifiers in parentheses. The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

What is claimed is:

1. (Currently Amended) A drive for switching devices, in which stored energy is converted to a rapid switching movement for activation of a switching member~~(21)~~, ~~with~~ the device comprising:

means for operating the switching member using a gas pressure ~~which is~~ produced at least one of directly ~~or~~ and indirectly; ~~being used to operate the switching member (21), characterized by~~ and

means for using ~~controlled~~ energy conversion on the basis of a spark discharge, in which electrical energy at least one of ~~which is~~ stored and~~or~~ ~~is~~ taken from the power distribution power supply, ~~is used in order~~ to vaporize a fluid~~, that is to say a liquid or gaseous medium,~~ ~~by means of~~via an electrical discharge, ~~and in which the~~a gas pressure ~~which is~~ produced by the vaporization process ~~acts~~ acting as a drive medium on the switching member~~(20)~~.

2. (Currently Amended) The drive as claimed in claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the fluid is water.

3. (Currently Amended) The drive as claimed in claim 2, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the fluid contains ion-conductive additives.

4. (Currently Amended) The drive as claimed in ~~one of the preceding claims~~claim 1, having a spark gap, ~~which is~~ arranged within the fluid, for energy conversion, ~~characterized in that~~

the spark gap ~~(31, 32) is~~ not being live during operation of the switching device ~~(1),~~ and ~~is~~ being loaded briefly with voltage only for the process of tripping the switching member ~~(21)~~.

5. (Currently Amended) The drive as claimed in claim 4, ~~characterized in that~~further comprising means ~~(33, 34) are provided~~ for production of a high-voltage pulse, ~~and in that~~ the high-voltage pulse ~~is~~ being passed to an auxiliary electrode ~~(32)~~ of the spark gap.

6. (Currently Amended) The drive as claimed in claim 5, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the high-voltage pulse is produced by a voltage source ~~(34)~~ with a parallel-connected capacitor ~~(33)~~.

7. (Currently Amended) The drive as claimed in claim 5, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the auxiliary electrode ~~(32)~~ has an associated switch ~~(35)~~.

8. (Currently Amended) The drive as claimed in claim 7, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the switch is a semiconductor switch, in particular an IGBT, power MOSFET or thyristor.

9. (Currently Amended) The drive as claimed in claim 5, ~~characterized in that~~further comprising means ~~are provided~~ for inductive injection of the high-voltage pulse.

10. (Currently Amended) The drive as claimed in ~~one of the preceding claims, characterized in that~~claim 1, further comprising means ~~(40 - 45) are provided~~ for latching/unlatching the axially moving bolt ~~(20)~~ with the moving contact ~~(21)~~.

11. (Currently Amended) The drive as claimed in claim 9, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the latching/unlatching means ~~(40 – 45)~~ operate mechanically.

12. (Currently Amended) The drive as claimed in claim 9, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the latching/unlatching means ~~(40 – 45)~~ operate magnetically.

13. (Currently Amended) The drive as claimed in claim 10, wherein ~~or 11, characterized in that~~ the energy for latching is applied by the electrohydraulic drive ~~(30)~~.

14. (Cancelled).

15. (New) The drive as claimed in claim 7, wherein the switch is at least one of an IGBT, power MOSFET and thyristor.

16. (New) The drive as claimed in claim 11, wherein the energy for latching is applied by the electrohydraulic drive.